Times-Picayune
3-21-67

Shield Tighter for Presidents

Present Setup Would've Saved JFK, Word

By EDMOND LEBRETON

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lee Harvey Oswald could have been denied any opportunity to fire at President John F. Kennedy if protective agencies had been equipped four years ago as they are now, Rep. Tom Steed, D-Okla., said Monday.

Steed heads the House Appropriations subcommittee that heard testimony from the Secret Service on its protective operations and the financing sought for them. Some, but not all, of the testimony was made public last week.

The great advance since Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, Tex., on Nov. 22, 1963, Steed said, has been the development of a computerized system of reporting, exchanging and quickly retrieving information on persons suspected by law enforcement agencies of being potential threats to a president's life.

WOULD HAVE KNOWN

Steed said there is no question but that, if such a system had existed in 1963, the Secret Service and other authorities would have been alerted to Oswald's presence in Dallas and his access to a vantage point from which the president's motorcade could be attacked.

Oswald had a record as an erratic supporter of left-wing causes who had lived in the Soviet Union, married a Russian and attempted to renounce his U.S. citizenship.

The Warren Commission that investigated Kennedy's death said it found no evidence contradicting the conclusion that Oswald, acting alone, killed Kennedy with gunfire from the Texas Book Depository building in Dallas.

However, there have been many publications questioning this conclusion and an investigation now is in progress in New Orleans, La., of an alleged conspiracy linking Oswald with others.

FACTS NOW IN MINUTES

"Today, when the President decides on a visit to some city, the Secret Service within minutes can have information as to any persons on its list of suspicious persons, which is built up with contributions from the FBI and local law enforcement agencies, will be in the vicinity," Steed said in an interview. "It can then arrange for surveillance or other action considered necessary.

"I think it is obvious that Oswald would have been on such a list if the present information system had been in existence then."

Steed said Congress in earlier years authorized the funds to set up the computer system and that the Secret Service appropriation just approved by the committee, $16.85 million, includes funds to man it.

The Secret Service declined comment on Steed's remarks.